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## **One Step to Better Health: EXERCISE!**

**Staying physically active** is vital to staying well. Regular exercise helps protect the organs and strengthens the muscles, bones and blood flow as we age.

Most of us are not taking advantage of the many benefits of exercise. Do you get the recommended 30 to 60 minutes of moderate- or vigorous-intensity activity most days?

If the answer is no, you might find the latest evidence very motivating.

A federal advisory committee recently reported on the past 12 years of research linking exercise to health protection. Some of the results: Physically active people have a lower risk for the most serious health threats – including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, depression, colon and breast cancer as well as death from all causes combined.

Walking, sports, gardening and all physical chores count toward the minimum goal of 30 minutes, even when performed in 10-minute increments. This routine can improve your most vital health signs: weight, muscle to fat ratio, cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

### **Who benefits from exercise?**

- **Overweight** adults improve their health, even without weight loss.
- **People with diabetes** or heart disease can prevent future complications.
- **Men** can get their weight down and their stress under control.
- **Women** build strong bones and reduce symptoms of menopause.
- **Children** grow healthier bodies while having fun.
- **Smokers** can reduce nicotine cravings and feelings of anxiety and depression.
- **Everybody** can generally feel better, age healthier and ward off chronic disease.

**Use the opportunity of a fresh start this New Year to see where exercise fits into your daily life.** Consult your provider before major increases in activity. *Then step up to better health.*

### **BEST BITS**

**Our nation's blood supply is often low in January**, which is designated National Blood Donor Month. People who donate regularly may not give blood during the winter due to illness, travel, bad weather and the holidays. To learn more, visit the American Association of Blood Banks at [www.aabb.org](http://www.aabb.org) to locate donation sites. You may save a life – what a great New Year's resolution!

Source: Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report: Executive Summary. U.S.

Department of Health and Human Services, 6/11/08. Accessed 8/20/08 at [www.health.gov/paguidelines/Report/Default.aspx](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines/Report/Default.aspx).

**The “100-calorie snack packs”** sold in markets, vending machines and airports seem like a good way to snack light. But people often eat more than one mini-pack, viewing them as harmless diet food. They are small, but a 100-calorie pack of cookies is still a pack of cookies. If you have trouble stopping after one, just buy one – or have a carrot instead.

Source: "M&Ms as Diet Food? 100-Calorie Pack Misconceptions." 8/18/08. Journal of Consumer Research. Accessed on 8/22/08 at [http://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2008-08/uocp-mad082208.php](http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2008-08/uocp-mad082208.php).

**How healthy can you get?** This month’s special report offers a guide to goal setting and the stages of change that can help you succeed with healthy habits in the new year. In future issues look for monthly **GOAL LINE** coaching messages with motivational quick tips to keep you on target through the year. The newsletter staff has also set some goals for 2009: monthly quizzes, self-assessments, and more mental health help (because we’re watching out for your well-being).

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SPECIAL REPORT

## **Ready, Set, GOAL!**

**The most important parts of any personal change** are knowing why you want to make it and having the desire to make it. If you want to kick cigarettes or lose weight, for example, your method and success in reaching that goal may rely on recognizing its impact on your life (awareness) and the value of changing it (motivation).

The next step is convincing yourself that you can do it, and finally being ready to do it (read “Help!” at right). Learning why change can be challenging will help you create a practical plan that guides you through your probable ups and downs.

**Here are some strategies often used when setting goals:**

**Be specific.** Write down how you will reach your goals step by step, if necessary, with specific numbers and timelines.

*Example:* Instead of setting a goal of losing weight by eating less, record the actions you will take to trim 5 pounds in 2 months, such as walking 10 miles a week. *Example:* Instead of quitting smoking on New Year’s Day without a plan, take advance steps. You could meet with your health care provider about the best ways to counter nicotine cravings.

**Be realistic.** Set attainable actions, not easy ones. Identify those within your reach

with effort. Consider your time, budget and personal preferences.

*Example:* You may want to replace all desserts with herb tea, all at once. More realistic: Reduce the number and portions of desserts.

**Be watchful.** Record your actions and progress in a journal so you can visually track and enjoy your success. It builds confidence and reinforces what you're working toward.

*Journal uses:* Note energy and mood level, appetite, daily weight, exercise time, steps or distance.

**Be patient.** Change usually takes time and perseverance. Results may come slowly, but accept and respect the gradual progress – it's better than no progress at all!

**Be flexible.** You can expect setbacks or relapses when building new habits. They're part of the process of change. This is the time you'll learn resilience. Always keep the prize in sight, and keep trying.

[Cutline]

Transform your New Year's resolutions into permanent, positive behavior.

## Help! Getting to Step One

**Some changes can be very tough to make.** In the book, *Changing for Good*, psychologists say we are more likely to succeed in reaching our goals and maintaining new behavior when we observe these predictable stages of change:

**Pre-contemplation** – You are becoming aware of a situation that needs changing, though you may not want to change. Others may see that you have a problem.

**Contemplation** – You are thinking about what you want to change and trying to convince yourself you need to act. Many get stuck here unless they begin to view the change as more important than not changing.

**Preparation** – You decide to make the change and begin creating an action plan. This might include studying the problem, setting a “start” date, signing up for a class, or consulting your provider or other experts.

**Action** – You are starting new behaviors and controlling your environment to enable the change to happen. *Helpful:* recordkeeping or goal-setting strategies (see above).

**Maintenance** – You are seeing the benefits of change and want to guard your progress. The goal now is preventing relapse while continuing the new behavior. *Helpful:* relying on your support group for encouragement.

Source: *Changing for Good: The Revolutionary Program That Explains the Six Stages of Change*, by Prochaska, Norcross and Diclemente (William Morrow & Co., 1994)

**GOAL LINE: Too tired after work to work out? Plan a mid-shift activity break – walk or visit a gym – and recharge for the balance of your day.**

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FITNESS

## **New Year Food Diary: Write Way to Lose**

Ask a dietitian to name the key to successful weight loss and the answer will likely be: Write down everything you eat and drink. Study after study shows the more facts you record, the more weight you will lose.

### **5 Benefits of Keeping a Daily Food Diary**

**1** Reveals visually your food choices – the good, the excess, and the missing ingredients.

**2** Monitors the volume of food you eat – you can track calories or servings.

**3** Encourages mindful eating – the act of writing leads you to make smarter choices or avoid overeating.

**4** Connects your choices with what you're feeling and doing when you eat or drink – you can identify situations that make you choose the wrong food, or eat when you're not hungry.

**5** Ensures you choose from each food group – you can create balance by replacing unwanted snacks or fast foods with healthier options such as whole grains and produce.

***Most important:*** Your diary will reinforce your wish to eat well and achieve a healthy weight.

**Writing down what goes in your mouth can be a real eye-opener.** Surveys have shown that people underestimate their daily diets by hundreds of calories. Record everything – even the little nibbles while preparing meals. Helpful: Note where you eat (work, restaurants, car), how hungry you are when you eat, and feelings; these factors can reveal habits that may be undermining your weight loss.

### **Food Diary**

**Day**\_\_\_\_\_

**What You Ate/Drank  
or**

**Where and**

**Hunger:**

**Mood:**

**Activity**

**and How Much \_\_\_\_\_ With Whom Scale 1-10 Up, Down, Even  
Thoughts \_\_\_\_\_**

Breakfast/Servings

Lunch/Servings

Dinner/Servings

Snacks/Servings

Glasses of Water \_\_\_\_\_

Fruits and Vegetables \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise:** Activity and Minutes

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**Start today** – copy this basic form to begin recording your daily diet. To learn more about serving sizes for your calorie intake, age, gender and activity level, visit [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov), where you will find the USDA's food and activity tracker.

Sources:

Caroline J. Cederquist, MD. "Food Diary: You Are What You Eat." Wellness Junction, Health Resources Publishing, 2006. Accessed 9/4/08 at [www.wellnessjunction.com/athome/weight\\_control/diary.htm](http://www.wellnessjunction.com/athome/weight_control/diary.htm).

Judy Upton, RD. "Healthy Eating: Nutrition Advice/Food Diary Can Double Weight Loss, New Study Shows." Health, 8/21/08.

ShapeUp America: <http://www.shapeup.org/support/maintain/logform1.php>

**GOAL LINE: People try fad diets to lose weight fast, but mostly gain only short-term results. Better: You can enjoy favorite foods – just eat LESS.**

## 2009 Newsletter Challenge: Mind Your Mental Health

**The editors have paid attention** to your growing interest in a subject near and dear to all of us – our mental health. Specifically, how do we cope with stress, worry and the various forms of depression, as well as the daily challenge of keeping our busy lives in harmony? And where can we turn for help?

In upcoming issues of this newsletter, we will focus on several psychological matters, including: importance of friendship and positive self-assessment; countering common stressors; help for depression; managing major life challenges; helping protect your memory by protecting your mind; and mind and body relaxation techniques.

Obviously, mental fitness can affect relationships and the ability to function and enjoy life. But because psychological problems can seem vague and murky, we tend to ignore them. Sometimes the first signs are physical, such as ongoing fatigue, headache or sleeplessness.

***How would you rate your emotional health today?*** Take a few minutes to assess your frame of mind during the past 2-3 months.

- ☐ *I am feeling more tense than usual.*
- ☐ *I am more tired than usual, even when I get enough sleep.*
- ☐ *I don't have enough time to relax.*
- ☐ *I feel more pessimistic than usual.*
- ☐ *I often feel lonely or unable to relate to others.*
- ☐ *I am apathetic about my work and former interests.*
- ☐ *I feel angry or resentful about many situations.*
- ☐ *I don't know how to feel better.*

If you checked 3 or more boxes, you probably know it's time for a serious review of your life and how it may be affecting your emotions. The first step toward a better understanding is to meet with your health care provider, who can advise you on both self-care and therapeutic measures you can try. **Key:** Be honest with your provider; openly discuss your feelings and how they are making you unhappy.

In preparation for your provider visit, do some research on mental health; start with the resources below.

### MORE INFO

National Institute of Mental Illness: [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml)

National Alliance on Mental Illness: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

### Sources:

"Your Mental Health is Important!" Office of Youth Affairs, 7/23/08.

"The Numbers Count: Mental Disorders in America." National Institute of Mental Health, 6/26/08. Accessed 9/15/08 at [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america.shtml).

"What is Mental Illness? Mental Illness Facts." National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2008. Access 9/15/08 at

## **Save More, Spend Less Flex Your Financial Muscle**

**It seems that everything** – from groceries and gas – is getting more expensive. So how can you manage to save your hard-earned cash? **Follow this advice to stretch your dollars.**

- Having a get-together? Have a potluck so everyone shares in the expenses.
- Tempted to buy on impulse? Enforce a 1-week wait period to see if you can live without it. If you can, don't buy it; bank the savings.
- Shop only when necessary and use a planned list. Try to use up what's in your pantry first. Frequent shopping trips may tempt you to buy items you don't need. *Tip:* Don't grocery shop when you are hungry.
- Enjoy your area's free recreational and entertainment resources. Try hiking, biking, or walking in a local park. Go to free museums and exhibits. Attend free concerts.
- Close doors and vents to unused rooms to save on heating and cooling costs.
- Learn how to do simple home repair jobs. Home improvement centers often offer free workshops for projects.
- Do you have a talent or special skill? Consider making gifts when possible.
- Use your public library often, rather than buying new books and magazines.

**Final thought:** Learning to save more and spend less puts you more in control over your money, your sense of security and your future.

Sources:

"Retirement Blueprint." Fidelity, 8/2005: 12-18.

"Saving for Retirement." Financial Planning Association. Accessed 9/5/08 at [www.fpaforfinancialplanning.org/LifeGoals/Retiring/](http://www.fpaforfinancialplanning.org/LifeGoals/Retiring/).

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SELF CARE

### **QUIZ: Headache Relief Naturally** *By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP*

**Most headaches** involve abnormal nerve activity within your brain. Common triggers are stress, alcohol, lack of sleep and a variety of foods and environmental factors.

Fortunately, we have several mind-body therapies and self-care techniques that can often help calm the affected nerves so you have less pain. Research suggests these

methods may be helpful for migraine, tension-type, and chronic headaches. **Test your knowledge:**

**1. Which is not a common headache trigger?**

- a. Bright lights
- b. Strong odors
- c. Walking or jogging
- d. Stress and worry

**2. What self-care technique may relieve a headache once it's started?**

- a. Sit quietly or lie down
- b. Relax your body from head to toe
- c. Take slow, deep breaths
- d. All of the above

**3. Stress management is effective for tension headaches.**

☐ True ☐ False

**4. Which alternative technique has not been shown to help headaches?**

- a. Chelation therapy
- b. Biofeedback
- c. Guided imagery
- d. Hypnosis

**5. What is the best place to start for headache relief?**

- a. Web sites
- b. Primary care provider
- c. Neurologist
- d. Occupational therapist

**ANSWERS**

1. *c.* Regular exercise can reduce headache frequency. Physical activity stimulates the release of endorphins that may also ease early headache pain.
2. *d.* Also, try a warm shower, apply a warm or cool compress, or massage your scalp or neck muscles. The key is to ease the muscle tension causing the pain.
3. *True.* If you can reduce or control emotional stress before it causes muscle tension, you can reduce the frequency or severity of your headaches.
4. *a.* Other approaches that may be therapeutic over time include meditation, relaxation training, cognitive behavior therapy (counseling), yoga and tai chi.
5. *b.* Talk to your provider about your treatment options. With the right guidance, self-care and mind-body therapies may be just as beneficial for chronic headaches as taking medications. (*American Family Physician*, 11/15/07)

**When to consult your provider:** Your headaches persist, are severe, frequent, unusual or new, or you develop fever, visual problems, or other symptoms.



Source: Victor Sierpina, et al. "Mind-body therapies for headache," American Family Physician 76 (2007): 1515-1522.

## **Pedicure Precautions**

**Don't spoil your foot spa experience** with a skin infection. Salons that perform pedicures and manicures should clean and disinfect tools and contact areas between each customer but studies show that many salons do not. Take precautions:

- Before choosing your salon inquire about its specific cleaning procedures.
- Do not visit the salon if you have any signs of broken skin from scratches, hangnails, cuts, bites or other sores as these may be vulnerable to infection.

After your appointment, see your provider if you notice these signs of infection: open wounds that look like bug bites on your feet and legs, especially if they get larger or more severe.

Sources:

"Preventing Pedicure Foot Spa Infections." 3/13/08. EPA. Accessed on 8/26/08 at <http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/factsheets/pedicure.htm>.

"Department of Consumer Affairs Director Introduces New Safety Recommendations for Pedicures." 6/27/06. California Department of Consumer Affairs. Accessed on 8/26/08 at [http://www.dca.ca.gov/publications/press\\_releases/2006/0627\\_bbc.shtml](http://www.dca.ca.gov/publications/press_releases/2006/0627_bbc.shtml).

**GOAL LINE: Support for tobacco quitters: Ask a counselor for help now, by phone or instant message, at [www.smokefree.gov/index.asp](http://www.smokefree.gov/index.asp).**

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## **SAFETY**

### **Pedestrian Safety**

**Using streets without sidewalks**, avoiding drivers who run red lights, or watching drivers who aren't watching for pedestrians ... Getting to and from your destination on foot can be a safety challenge sometimes.

Whether walking is part of your work day or your daily exercise routine, it's easy

to forget that traveling on foot requires caution and your full attention – even on pedestrian-friendly streets. You never know when an inattentive, stressed-out driver will come rushing around a corner. So always stay observant and obey traffic rules:

**Cross at designated street crossings.** Entering a street mid-block or from between parked cars is risky.

**Triple-check:** Look left-right-left until no cars are in your way. **Watch** for right-turning cars with drivers focused on oncoming traffic; make eye contact with them before crossing.

**Check for blind spots** when moving around large vehicles; give them plenty of space.

**Stand out.** Wear brightly colored clothing. If it's dark or stormy, use reflective material on shoes, cap or jacket to help drivers see you.

**Walk defensively.** Even if you're signaled to walk, drivers may not see you or give you the right of way. Always check the traffic flow.

**No sidewalk?** Travel on the left side of the street facing traffic.

**Avoid walking when drunk or drowsy from medication.** Many pedestrian injuries involve alcohol use by drivers and pedestrians.

**Hold young children by the hand** when crossing traffic.

**Pay attention.** If you're on a cell phone or listening to music, you may not spot similarly distracted drivers.

[Cutline]

Walking is good exercise, but be aware. A pedestrian is killed almost every 2 hours and injured every 8 minutes, according to U.S. statistics.

Sources:

"Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety." U.S. DOT, 12/11/07. Accessed 8/20/08 at [www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/index.htm](http://www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/index.htm).

"Everyone is a Pedestrian." U.S. DOT. Accessed 8/20/08 at [www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/issues/crossing.htm](http://www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/issues/crossing.htm).

"The Signs of Safety Are Everywhere." U.S. DOT. Accessed 8/20/08 at [www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/issues/signs.htm](http://www.tfhrc.gov/safety/pedbike/issues/signs.htm).

## Pack a Family First Aid Kit

**A basic first aid kit is a smart accessory** for every home, business and vehicle. Keep one handy to quickly care for minor injuries such as cuts, burns and bites. Do you have everything you need in your kit?

Use this **checklist** to assemble your kits, based on recommendations from the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).

**Supplies:**

- ☐ adhesive tape and several sizes of adhesive bandages

- ☐ alcohol wipes or ethyl alcohol
- ☐ calamine lotion
- ☐ elastic bandage
- ☐ hydrogen peroxide
- ☐ soap and antiseptic wipes
- ☐ sterile gauze

**Medications:**

- ☐ 1% hydrocortisone cream
- ☐ acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- ☐ antibiotic cream (triple-antibiotic ointment)

**Tools:**

- ☐ disposable instant cold packs
- ☐ flashlight and extra batteries
- ☐ mouthpiece for performing CPR (ask your local Red Cross)
- ☐ plastic gloves, several pairs
- ☐ tweezers, sharp scissors and safety pins
- ☐ thermometer

**Other:**

- ☐ list of emergency phone numbers
- ☐ blanket
- ☐ first aid manual
- ☐ spare cell phone and charger

*Tips:* Make sure the family knows where to find your first aid kits, but keep them out of reach of small children. Carry one when you travel; pack extra prescription medications.

***Ipecac syrup for poisoning?*** It's no longer recommended for children who have swallowed poison. There's no evidence it helps, according to the AAFP. Instead, call Poison Control at 800-222-1222 or 911.

Sources:

"First Aid Kit." DHS, 2008. Accessed 8/14/08 at [www.ready.gov/america/getakit/firstaidkit.html](http://www.ready.gov/america/getakit/firstaidkit.html).

"First Aid Kit." American Academy of Family Physicians, 2008.

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NUTRITION

## **Cost-Saving Healthy Meals** *By Cynthia Gale, MS, RD*

**Despite relatively moderate increases in food staples** during the past 2 decades, Americans are now facing spikes in basic grocery items. In the past 18 months, some

regions are seeing double-digit percentage increases for eggs, flour, fryer chickens and milk.

With higher prices many consumers wonder if it's possible to still eat healthy. Some families opt for fast food meals, which offer cheap menu items – but they tend to be low in nutritive value and high in calories.

With a little planning, kitchen know-how and smart shopping, affordable and nutritious meals are just a shopping list away. Here's how to get the most from staples that are relatively inexpensive yet loaded with nutrition.

**Beans and lentils:** Use these powerhouse foods in place of expensive meat, poultry, or fish; they cost less, are low in fat and provide many of the same nutrients. Combine them with fresh vegetables and rice or pasta for a main course.

*Tip:* Canned or dried, legumes make nutritious, hearty soups. Start with our Incredibly Easy Split-Pea Soup recipe.

**Brown rice and whole-grain pasta:** These are affordable crowd pleasers when added to leftover meat and veggies.

*Tip:* Use them in stir-fries or to create main course salads.

**Soups:** Nutritious, satisfying and convenient, make extra for multiple meals. Save your vegetable trimmings and bones to make your own stock, and then add what's handy – veggies, pasta, rice or leftover meats or poultry.

**Vegetables and fruit:** They are generally cheaper when bought in season. Stock large bags of frozen vegetables you can quickly add to soups, casseroles or dinner menus.

*Tip:* Add frozen fruit to blender drinks made with cost-saving nonfat dry milk.

**Meats, poultry, fish:** Look for specials that can bring big savings. Try less expensive meat cuts such as chuck or bottom round roast, which work well in stews and casseroles. Buy cheaper whole chickens and cut them into serving size pieces yourself.

*Tip:* Limit meat consumption; add extra vegetables and beans to make the meal go further. Enjoy more vegetarian fare.

[Cutline]

**Hunt for specials:** Buy discounted or bulk items and repackaging them into portions for later use. Take advantage of your grocer's day-old bread and bakery products or discount bakeries that sell bread near its expiration date. Buy private label and value brand foods.

Sources:

"Can you Afford to Eat Right." Tufts University Health and Nutrition Newsletter, 5/08. Accessed 8/30/08 at [www.tuftshealthletter.com/ShowArticle.aspx?rowId=545](http://www.tuftshealthletter.com/ShowArticle.aspx?rowId=545). Rebecca Pratt."

Eating Healthy on a Budget Save Money Without Sacrificing Quality." Spark People (no date). Accessed 9/1/08 at [www.sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition](http://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/nutrition).

Pallavi Gogoi. "Squeezed by Rising Food Costs." Business Week, 4/14/08. Accessed 9/15/08 at [www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/apr2008/db20080411\\_198152.htm?chan=top+news\\_top+news+index\\_top+story](http://www.businessweek.com/bwdaily/dnflash/content/apr2008/db20080411_198152.htm?chan=top+news_top+news+index_top+story).

## RECIPE OF THE MONTH

### **Incredibly Easy Split-Pea Soup**

**This soup makes a great lunch or dinner that is hearty and filling.**

2 cups dried **split peas**, rinsed and drained  
8 cups low-sodium **chicken or vegetable broth**  
1 medium **onion**, chopped  
3 stalks **celery**, roughly chopped  
1 clove **garlic**, minced  
1 **ham bone** or 1 cup diced ham (optional)  
3 **carrots**, roughly chopped  
¼ tsp **pepper**

- 1)** Combine peas and broth and heat to boiling; boil uncovered 2 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and let stand 1 hour.
- 2)** Stir in onion, celery and garlic. Add ham bone (if using).
- 3)** Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 1½ hours or until peas are tender.
- 4)** Remove ham bone and separate ham from bone. Trim excess fat from ham, then cut ham into ½-inch pieces.
- 5)** Stir ham and carrots into soup.
- 6)** Heat to boiling; reduce heat. Cover and simmer about 30 minutes or until carrots are tender and soup is desired consistency.

**MAKES 11 CUPS.**

**Per cup: 165 calories 12.5g protein 1.5g fat 25.6g carbs 10g fiber 232mg sodium**

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EXPERT ADVICE

### **Q: Latest on vitamin D?**

**A: Vitamin D has recently made headline news.** Research shows that many people may be at risk for a D deficiency. Vitamin D is vital to health with some potential benefits being studied, including:

**Bones** – The chief function of vitamin D is to maintain normal blood levels of calcium and phosphorus by promoting the absorption of these minerals from your intestinal tract. Once absorbed, your body uses the minerals to form and maintain strong

bones. A vitamin D shortage may lead to bone diseases such as rickets in children and osteoporosis in adults.

**Cardiovascular system** – Scientists have linked insufficient vitamin D to coronary heart disease and high blood pressure.

**Autoimmune disease** – Vitamin D helps regulate your immune system. Lower blood levels have been linked to type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, and multiple sclerosis.

**Cancer** – Preliminary research suggests that low levels of D may be related to higher rates of cancer of the colon, breast, ovaries and prostate.

**How can one nutrient have so many roles?** Vitamin D does something no other vitamin does. It acts like a hormone, helping relay chemical messages around the body. This hormone-like activity makes vitamin D indispensable in a wide range of health-related tasks.

**How common is a shortage of the vitamin?** Growing evidence suggests that almost everyone is at risk for vitamin D deficiency. Indoor jobs or northern climes may elevate the risk because the skin produces D when exposed to sunlight.

**To ensure you're getting enough vitamin D, know the sources:**

- Salmon, mackerel, tuna and sardines; fortified milk, soymilk and orange juice; and some breads and cereals.
- Vitamin D3 (*cholecalciferol*) supplement; consult your provider about the amount.
- Sunlight exposure limited to 10-15 minutes twice a week to your face, arms, legs or back. (Afterwards, be sure to apply sunscreen.)

Sources:

"Vitamin D essentials." *Cooking Light*, 5/08: 44-50.

"Dietary Supplement Fact Sheet: Vitamin D," Office of Dietary Supplements, National Institutes of Health, accessed on 8/18/08 at <http://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind.asp>

## NEWS BRIEFS

**Add 14 years to your life with these 4 choices:** 1) Don't smoke. 2) Stay physically active, either on the job or in leisure time. 3) Eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables a day. 4) Drink alcohol only in moderation. The top 4 findings were based on a study of 20,000 reasonably healthy men and women ages 45-79 living in the UK. Regardless of gender, social status or even body weight, those who followed none of the 4 choices listed above had 4 times the risk of dying during a decade than did those who maintained all of them. Not smoking offered the greatest benefits in terms of survival. (*Public Library of Science Medicine*, 1/08)

**In contrast to the above study**, smoking, diabetes, obesity and hypertension significantly reduced the likelihood of a 90-year life span, while regular exercise substantially improved it: 70-year-old men who do not smoke, have normal blood

pressure and weight, no diabetes and exercise 2 to 4 times a week are 54% more likely to reach age 70. (*Archives of Internal Medicine*, 2/08).

Source: "Four Simple Habits Add 14 Years of Life." *Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter*, 4/08: 1-2.

**What choices are on your list of resolutions? Happy New Year!**